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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Climate crisis and devastating natural disasters in Greece - Information from the Greek delegation

Delegations will find in the Annex a document on the above subject to be presented by the Greek delegation under "Any other business" at the "Agriculture and Fisheries" Council on 18 September 2023.

Climate crisis and devastating natural disasters in Greece

Over the past few weeks Greece has been in the epicenter of the climate crisis, witnessing some of the most extreme wildfires and floods ever been recorded in the country and the European continent.

In particular, during August and September, Greece has been severely hit by two unprecedented phenomena: (a) the mega-fire of Evros (in the Eastern Macedonia and Thrace region) destroying vast areas of forest. An area larger than 93.500 hectares of various types of forest and arable land burned down, (b) the massive storm “Daniel”, causing calamitous floods mainly in Thessaly and Central Greece. Between 4th-8th of September, the area inundated with: 1096,2mm of rain per square meter in Pilio, 658,8mm in Karditsa, 477,4 in Trikala, and 466mm in Farsala/Larisa¹. The entire Hellenic Civil Protection mechanism, the Hellenic Armed Forces and emergency response units have been immediately activated to provide relief to the victims.

Since this unprecedented crisis is still ongoing, it is not possible to assess, at this stage, the magnitude of its effects. However, it will inevitably have a severe impact on our economy, social fabric and agricultural production, endangering the security of food supply. Individual farmers and enterprises have suffered substantial damages to their holdings, warehouses, crops and livestock units while entire businesses active in agricultural production, and relevant infrastructure have been destroyed.

The following figures give an indicative image of the contribution of the affected areas to the Greek economy and agriculture:

- In the Region of Thessaly, the agricultural production accounts for 5.5% of total national GDP, namely:
 - 57% of the national arable crops (cotton, cereals, alfalfa, legumes and leguminous plants),

¹ According to the National Observatory of Athens

- 40% of the national tree crops,
 - 24% of cattle,
 - 11% of sheep and goats,
 - 16% of milk production,
 - 40% of soft cheese production, and
 - 25% of hard cheese production, of the country.
- In the region of Evros, the agricultural production amounts to:
- 23% of the energy crops,
 - 6.5% of animal capital, and
 - 3% of milk production of the country.

In the first days of the disaster, priority is given to direct crisis management measures: Several tons of dead animals have been transported to certified incineration sites in order to avoid an eventual public health crisis. Moreover, a first assessment of the quality of water and soil analysis is currently underway in order to assess the necessary measures for the preservation of water quality and the restoration of cultivated areas. In the coming days, a first damage assessment in cultivated land, crops and livestock will also be available.

Given the magnitude of the damage, significant funds will be needed in order to provide compensation for the loss of plant and animal production and restore destroyed infrastructure.

Greece is looking forward to cooperating with the European Commission on the urgent assistance measures that need to be taken in order to mitigate to the largest possible extent the consequences of the natural disaster.

These disasters have once more demonstrated the importance of EU assistance and civil protection mechanisms. Since, unfortunately, the recurrence of such phenomena is to be expected, an in-depth discussion on relevant EU instruments should be regarded as a priority.
